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Memorandum for: The Honorable Richard Perle
Assistant Secretary
International Security Policy
The Pentagon

Attached for your information is a typescript memorandum on the European Parliament election, prepared by [] Political Social Issues Branch. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further information.

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Director,

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Office of European Analysis
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Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

11 May 1984

European Community: European Parliament Election [redacted]

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Summary

The European Parliament (EP) election on 14 and 17 June will be tantamount to a series of national referenda on the popularity of the 10 EC member governments. Several of them are trying to shore up support in preparation for state or national elections. Opposition parties are using the campaign to attack governments' domestic policies, and may succeed in weakening ruling parties or coalitions in France, Italy, and Greece. [redacted]

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The vote will almost certainly give little impetus to West European unity, because EC issues are of secondary importance in the campaign and because voter turnout is likely to be low. The election, however, is providing an occasion for transnational cooperation by several party groupings in the Parliament. [redacted]

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The election's most direct importance for US interests will result from its domestic political consequences in the EC countries. For example, the election could strengthen the Italian Communists and lead to early national elections in Greece. In addition, loss of the present center-right EP majority--which we consider possible--could result in fewer EP resolutions supportive of US goals in arms control and East-West relations. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Office of European Analysis. It was requested by Col. Ty Cobb, National Security Council. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments may be addressed to [redacted] Chief, European Issues Division, [redacted]

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Background

The European Parliament theoretically gives the Community's 200 million voters a direct say in EC policy, but its powers are narrowly circumscribed. The EP initially consisted of members of the national legislatures nominated by the member governments. In 1979, the Community instituted direct, EC-wide elections to the Parliament in order to enhance its stature in relation to the Council of Ministers and the EC Commission. In practice, however, the EP remains weak:

- The EP's major functions are to consult with the other EC bodies, debate Community and international issues, and pass non-binding resolutions.
- The Parliament has no veto power over EC policies, which originate in the Commission and Council of Ministers.
- Parliament can veto the annual EC budget, if it can muster a two-thirds majority, and it did so in 1979. This is a difficult power for the Parliament to wield, however, because it is an all-or-nothing proposition: the EP can only veto the entire budget, not particular provisions. In 1979, the effect of the Parliament's veto was merely to delay approval of a budget for several months.
- Parliament also has the power to oust the EC Commission, but because this power is even more crude than Parliament's budgetary power, it has never been used. Parliament would have to dismiss the entire Commission, and would then have no say in the composition of a new Commission. [redacted]

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The EP does provide a forum for transnational party cooperation. Its members sit in international party groupings rather than in national delegations. At present, the Socialists are the largest single caucus, but the center-right groupings--the Christian Democrats, Conservatives, Liberals, and Gaullists--together have an absolute majority. (see table) [redacted]

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Low Public Interest

Publics in most EC countries are unenthusiastic about the elections, according to US diplomatic and press reports. What interest there is focuses more on national than on EC issues. In most countries, voter turnout probably will be lower than in 1979. [redacted]

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Surveys sponsored by the EC Commission confirm the low degree of public interest. Polls taken in October-November 1978 and October 1983--six months before the first and second EP elections--show that awareness of the election, the importance attached to it, and intention to vote have all declined. Respondents were about as likely in 1983 as in 1979 to say they had recently read or heard something about the Parliament, but when asked what they had read or heard, only 14 percent in 1983 specifically mentioned the EP election, compared to 28 percent in 1979. In 1983, respondents also were significantly less likely than in 1979 to say the election would be important and--except in Luxembourg, where a national election will be held the same day--less likely to say they definitely would vote (see tables). The actual participation rate in 1979--62 percent--was higher than indicated by the poll of intentions but much lower than in most national elections in Western Europe. [redacted]

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One reason for the lack of interest is probably the perception that the European Parliament is ineffective. By a six-to-one margin, respondents to the EC survey said members of the Parliament were too far removed from the concerns of EC voters. Only 15 percent said the EP has much power, but 59 percent said they would like to see it play a greater role. More specifically, overwhelming majorities in every country but Denmark said the EP should have more control over the EC budget and the functioning of the Common Market. Large majorities everywhere but Denmark also said the EP's first priority should be the creation of a European political union with a European government responsible to the Parliament. [redacted]

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Lackluster candidates are probably also discouraging voter interest. In the first EP election in 1979, parties nominated some of their leading politicians, but many resigned their EP seats soon after they had won them. This year, few government ministers and star campaigners are candidates. In West Germany, for example, the two largest parties have not nominated their "biggest names," according to press accounts. The French Socialist list is headed by the party chairman rather than a prominent government minister because President Mitterrand wants to limit the political impact of expected election losses, according to the US Embassy in Paris. And the US Embassy in Brussels reports the Belgian parties, in sharp contrast to 1979, have nominated few "glamour candidates." [redacted]

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Party Platforms

Nonetheless, the transnational umbrella "parties" in the European Parliament are trying to evoke interest in the election by stressing EC and international concerns. Three of the groupings--the Christian Democrats, Liberals, and Socialists--

have drafted platforms stressing EC economic and political cooperation. A group of environmentalist parties not yet represented in the EP has also issued a common platform and may form a caucus in the next Parliament. The Communists have not issued a joint statement, probably in part because the French party rejects the Italian Communists' pro-EC views. The conservative group consists almost exclusively of British members, with only two Danish counterparts. [redacted]

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The Christian Democrats' "action program" urges greater European union and, as a step in that direction, reduction of the veto power that each country enjoys in the Council of Ministers. The program endorses the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in principle but urges attention to the growing structural surpluses of various farm products. On international issues, the program condemns the Soviet Union for oppression and expansionism and urges close West European security cooperation with the United States on an equal footing. The program suggests the creation of a European Security Council to formalize EC discussions of security. [redacted]

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The Liberals' common program likewise calls for European union and greater use of majority voting in the Council of Ministers. The program urges vigorous reforms of the CAP, including lower, market-oriented payments to farmers designed to cut surplus production. The Liberals stress Western Europe's special ties with North America but call for a common European voice to influence US policies. To this end, they endorse a common Community foreign and security policy and suggest establishing a permanent secretariat for European Political Cooperation, the EC's informal foreign policy coordination mechanism. [redacted]

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The Socialists' "common manifesto" gives less emphasis to European unity and endorses the principle of unanimity in Council votes, according to the US Mission to the EC. The manifesto calls job creation Western Europe's top priority and urges work-sharing, reduced working time, and expansionary fiscal policies to combat unemployment. To reduce CAP surpluses, the Socialists suggest lowering farm production quotas. The manifesto also stresses arms control and calls for a more independent West European position in the East-West conflict. The French and Italian Socialists blocked a condemnation of further INF deployments, according to the US Mission to the EC, and the manifesto acknowledges that the socialist parties differ over the role of nuclear deterrence. [redacted]

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Green parties from several countries have also issued a program stressing peace, the environment, and Community relations with the Third World. At present, no Greens sit in the EP, but

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parties from France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg are coordinating their campaign efforts; they may win as many as seven or eight EP seats, according to the US Mission to the EC. The West German Greens have refused to join the campaign alliance as long as a small Dutch grouping including Communists remains excluded. If the West German Greens win any seats, however, they still might form an EP caucus with the other parties after the election. [redacted]

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National Issues

National concerns will probably outweigh international and EC issues in most countries. Members of the Parliament have told US officials they expect the content of the election platforms to have little influence on the vote. By contrast, the Europarlamentarians say the elections will be a popular referendum on the 10 governments' overall performance. [redacted]

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The Big Four

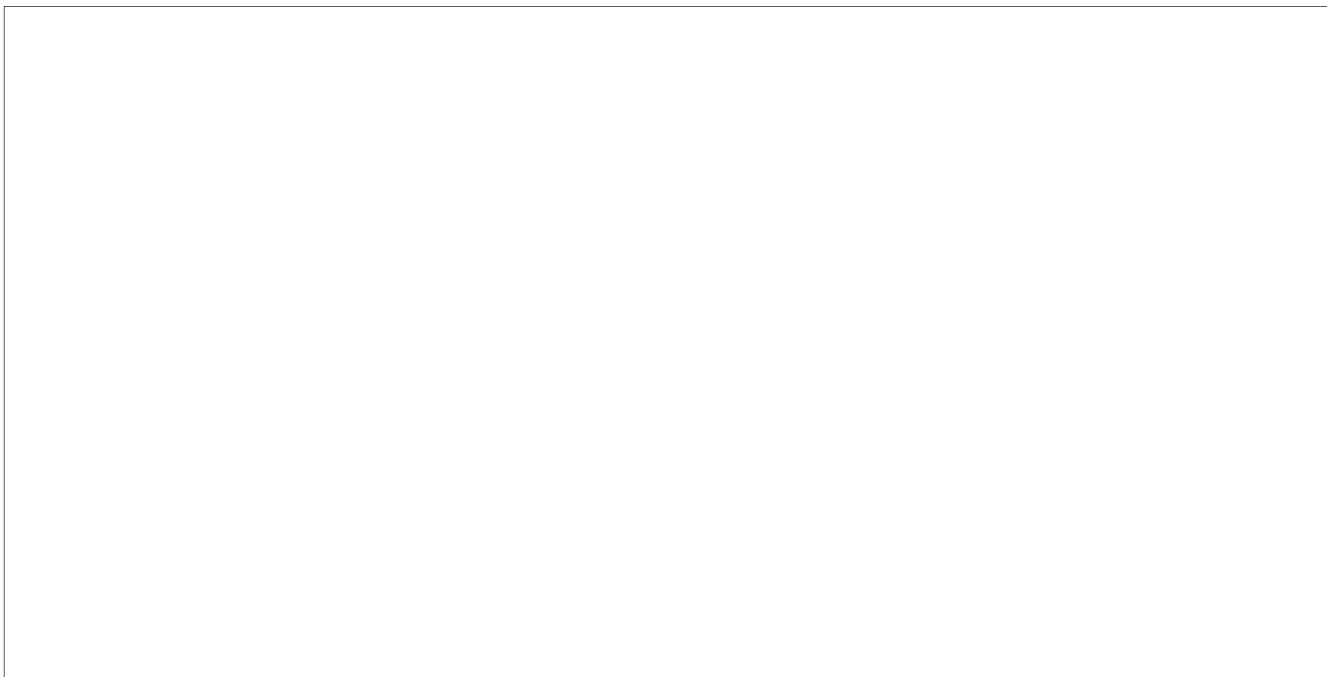
In France, the EP election will be an important national political test in preparation for the 1986 legislative election. According to US Embassy reports, the ruling Socialists are advocating closer West European cooperation as well as Spanish and Portuguese admission to the EC, in part to distract public attention from the economy. Their Communist coalition partners, by contrast, are appealing to anti-enlargement sentiment among French farmers. The Embassy reports the Socialists are certain to do less well than in their record victory in the 1981 National Assembly elections, and some polls predict another setback for the Communists. The Gaullist and Giscardian opposition parties have presented a common list headed by Simone Veil, the former EP President. Recent polls indicate a strong opposition showing, but weak organization, personal animosities, and disagreements over EC enlargement and budget policy are undermining the opposition's prospects for winning an absolute majority of the French delegates, according to the US Embassy in Paris. [redacted]

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In Italy, the election will be a referendum on the Socialist-led coalition government. According to the US Embassy in Rome, the Socialists and the small lay coalition parties expect to do well but the Christian Democrats probably will lose ground. This outcome could set the stage for a gradual abandonment of the five-party formula in favor of a new arrangement that includes the Communists, who expect at least to equal their showing in the 1983 national election. By contrast, Christian Democratic leaders have expressed concern to US officials that they will do even more poorly than in 1983, which was their worst performance in history. A new setback for the

Christian Democrats could leave the Communists the largest party in Italy's EP delegation and strengthen their claim to participation in the government. [redacted]

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In West Germany, public interest in the EP election is particularly low. State elections early next year will be a more important test of Chancellor Kohl's popularity, according to the US Embassy in Bonn. Opinion polls indicate voter turnout may fall below 50 percent, compared to 66 percent in 1979. So far, the major parties have engaged in little controversy over EC issues. Only the Greens--who hope to enter the EP for the first time--are calling for alternatives to the "EC of bureaucrats, bombs, and butter mountains," according to press reports. [redacted]

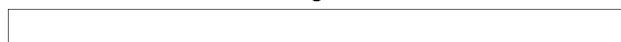
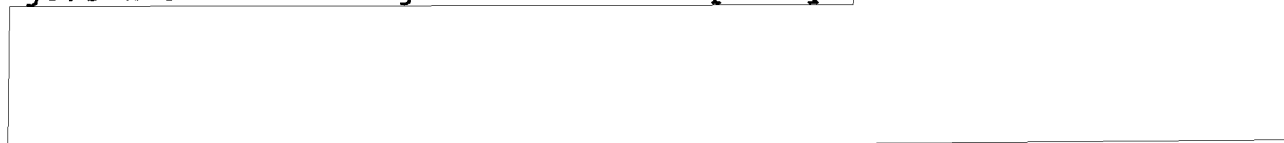
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The Smaller Six

The EP election may have its greatest impact in Greece. PASOK--the socialist governing party--and its Communist and conservative opponents all regard the election as a major referendum on the government. The US Embassy expects PASOK to suffer losses because of popular dissatisfaction with its economic policies, but believes conservative opposition gains may be moderated by leadership problems and ideological disunity. The pro-Moscow Communists are hoping a good showing at PASOK'S expense would enable them to exert more pressure on the government in foreign and economic policy. [redacted]

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In Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the EP election will be a test for center-right governments that are attempting to hold down social spending and budget deficits. In Denmark, Prime Minister Schlueter is very popular and his austerity measures are considered necessary, according to various opinion polls. We believe his Conservative Party is well placed to increase its representation in the EP. In Belgium and the Netherlands, however, the US Embassies report the Christian Democrats will probably lose some seats, in part because of negative reaction to cuts in social benefits. We believe heavy losses could make the Christian Democrats in both countries more cautious on both economic and defense policy, including INF deployment. The Christian Democratic-led Dutch coalition government now seems inclined to postpone an INF decision until after the EP election. []

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In Ireland, the election has generated little public interest, and the party balance is unlikely to shift by more than one or two seats, according to the US Embassy in Dublin. In Luxembourg, the US Embassy expects the EP vote to take second place to the national election scheduled the same day. []

Implications for the United States

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The election's most direct importance for US interests will result from its domestic political consequences in the EC countries. Communist gains in Italy, for example, could increase pressure on the Craxi government to moderate its pro-NATO policies. In France, expected Socialist losses will probably not mean added pressure on Mitterrand to change his pro-Alliance stance, because the Communists will probably also lose and because the rightist opposition has not challenged Mitterrand's foreign policies in the campaign. []

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Because the EP's powers in the Community are narrowly circumscribed, the election is unlikely to have any direct impact on EC policies toward the United States. The Parliament can reject the EC budget in toto and can dismiss the EC Commission en masse, but it has no control over specific economic policies and cannot sack individual commissioners. In foreign affairs, its role is strictly advisory. The EP debates international issues, puts questions to the EC president-country, and passes resolutions, but the 10 EC foreign ministers are not accountable to the Parliament. []

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The EP election could, however, affect US public diplomacy in Western Europe. In recent years, the EP's center-right majority has passed numerous resolutions generally supportive of US objectives. Last November, for example, the Parliament endorsed INF deployment. In the past few months, the EP has

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condemned Soviet active measures in Europe, called for the liberation of Andrei Sakharov, and demanded a Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea. Last March, the EP welcomed the announcement of elections in Nicaragua but urged the Sandinistas to ensure freedom of the press and other civil liberties. [redacted]

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We believe the center-right groupings--the Christian Democrats, Conservatives, Liberals, and Gaullists--are in some danger of losing their present absolute majority of 240 seats out of 434. No EC-wide polling has focused on the election outcome, and reliable national polls on the EP race are scarce or nonexistent in many countries. Based on press and US diplomatic reporting, however, the Christian Democrats and Conservatives seem likely to lose seats at least in the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium,* the Netherlands, and possibly West Germany. Only in France, Greece, and Denmark are right-of-center parties expected to gain significantly. Loss of an absolute majority would dilute the center-right groupings' domination of foreign policy discussions, requiring compromises with Socialists or independents. As a result, EP resolutions on foreign policy could become less supportive of US objectives. [redacted]

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*In Belgium, the US Embassy expects Liberal gains to balance Christian Democratic losses.

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